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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the role of staff development units with respect to "corporate culture" and in light of the experience of the Staff Development Division of the Saskatchewan Public Service. The term "corporate culture" has been defined as the values, symbols, and beliefs that people in a given organization hold jointly and that thus guide an organization. Corporate culture has a powerful influence throughout an organization, affecting everything from what decisions get made to who gets promoted. It is especially important for persons joining an organization to know whether the organization's culture and values are compatible with their own. Managers must likewise understand how their organization's corporate culture works if they want to accomplish the goals that they have established. Staff development units can perform four roles with respect to corporate culture. Such units can (1) analyze an organization's values, (2) define them, (3) influence them, and (4) reflect them. Analyzing an organization's values might involve identifying the values people believe that a given organization has, or it may mean making an organizational diagnosis (i.e., determining where the organization is today, where it wants to go, and how it can get there). A staff development unit can establish mechanisms whereby people at all levels in the organization can define its values. Influencing an organization's values entails establishing heroes who personify the culture, developing communications systems to carry the culture's message, and developing performance management systems to reward performance that is in keeping with corporate values. Like human resource departments, staff development units fulfill a supportive function. Yet, because staff development has a strong mandate to provide education (which is a form of socialization), it has an opportunity to socialize employees to the corporate culture and values of an organization. (MN)

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THE ROLE OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND THE CORPORATE CULTURE

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INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses the role of staff development units with respect to corporate culture. Four roles that a staff development unit may have with respect to corporate culture are identified: namely, analyzing it, defining it, influencing and, finally, reflecting it. How this has been accomplished or as the case may be, not accomplished is considered in light of the experience of the Staff Development Division of the Saskatchewan Public Service. The division is responsible for offering staff development programs for 13,000 public service employees of the Government of Saskatchewan.

DEFINITION

CORPORATE CULTURE -- These are the latest buzz words in management theory and practice. What do these words means? Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary 1986 defines culture as . .

> . . . the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thought, speech, action and artifacts and depends on man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations.

Some social scientists define culture as "man-made aspects of an environment." Certainly, a corporate culture is made by people just as an organization's real existence, is not in a balance sheet or products, but in the hearts and minds of its people.

A corporate culture is the values, symbols and beliefs that people jointly hold and which guide the organization. The culture of an organization is those values, those beliefs, which get translated into everyday behavior.

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According to Marvin Bower, author of The Will to Manage (1966) and for years managing director of McKinsey and Company, "Corporate culture is the way we do things around here."

Every organization has a corporate culture. Sometimes it's fragmented and difficult to read from the outside. Sometimes it's very strong and cohesive and everyone knows the goals of the organization.

Those companies with a strong corporate culture have been found to be more successful. McKinsey consultants found that companies with qualitative beliefs were uniformly outstanding performers . . . such companies as Price Waterhouse & Co., Dupont, Johnson & Johnson, Hewlett-Packard, Proctor & Gamble, to name a few of them.

These companies had corporate values and they talked about them. They boasted about them in slogans that said it all for them:

General Electric	:	**Progress is our most important product.**
Dupont	:	**Better things for better living through chemistry.**
I. B. M.	:	**I. B. M. means service.**

Their values tell a lot about them. At both General Electric and Dupont, it's obvious that research and development are valued. At I.B.M., if you want to do well, you provide

service, not just good service, but superior service. You don't just tell a client that you will deliver the part required. You tell them it is on order, you tell them when it will be shipped and you tell them when it would arrive. You go the extra mile because I.B.M. means service.

A strong culture has a system of informal rules that spell out how people are to behave most of the time. In a strong culture people know what is expected of them and performance management consultants tell us that when people know what is expected of them, they perform better.

In a strong culture people tend to feel better about what they do, so consequently they tend to work harder. And, this creates a force of energy in the organization.

A strong culture removes uncertainty by providing structure and standards and a value system for people to operate within. According to Frederick Herzberg, (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1983) a motivation theoretician, the importance of this cannot be under-estimated at a time when people often feel confused and uncertain.

IMPACT OF CORPORATE CULTURE

Whether it's weak or strong, the corporate culture has a powerful influence throughout an organization. It affects practically everything . . . from what decisions are made to who gets promoted to how employees dress. At General Electric its the researchers who get promoted; at I.B.M. it's the salespeople.

People at all stages of their careers need to understand culture and how it works.

Employees need to know it in order to "fit into" the organization and to do their jobs.

Those who want to get ahead want to understand it intuitively . . . to know what makes the place tick.

People considering joining an organization need to sense whether the culture and values of the organization are compatible with their own . . . even before they sign on.

Managers must understand very clearly how the culture works if they want to accomplish what they set out to do. If they want to implement a particular plan, they need to know if the organization values participation, lots of dialogue or if written memos from the boss are sufficient to launch a program.

VALUES

The essence of the corporate culture is values. Just as individuals have values, so too do organizations. There are posited values - the ideal ones which we all strive for - and there are the experienced values.

Values, as we know, are not hard like organizational structures, policies and procedures, strategies and budgets. Often they are not written down. But unless values are really valued they do not have operational significant; they do not guide action.

Raths, Harmin and Simon (1966) have, from their studies, identified seven criteria which, together, constitute an operational definition of a full value:

CHOOSING - relies on cognitive abilities	1) freely; 2) from alternatives; 3) after the thoughtful consideration of the consequences of each alternative;
PRIZING - emphasizes emotions	4) cherishing, being happy with the choice; 5) willing to affirm the choice publicly;
ACTING - concerned with external behavior	6) doing something with the choice; 7) repeatedly, in some pattern of life.

In organization values should meet most of the criteria

outlined by Raths, Harmin and Simon.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT ROLES

There are four roles which a staff development unit can perform with respect to corporate culture:

1) **Analyze the values of the organization**

2) **Define them**

3) **Influence the organization's values**

4) **Reflect them**

ANALYZING VALUES

TO ANALYZE the values of the organization might involve a survey of what values people believe the organization has and what they would like those values to be or, it might involve observation or analysis. As part of identifying the values of an organization, one would do an organizational diagnosis to identify where the organization is, why it exists, where it wants to go, how to get there and where its people are at. It is very much of a system approach. Organizational diagnosis is a means of analyzing corporate culture - where the organization is today, why, where it wants to go, how to get there.

DEFINING VALUES

TO DEFINE the values of an organization involves setting up mechanisms for people in the organization to define the corporate values. For the exercise to be meaningful, people at all levels of the organization must be involved in this process. It cannot come from the top down. They may draw upon the information gained in the first step of identifying the norms and the beliefs in the organization.

INFLUENCING VALUES

TO INFLUENCE the values of an organization involves establishing heroes who personify the culture, developing communications systems for carrying the message of the culture, and developing performance management systems which reward performance which is in keeping with corporate values.

REFLECTING VALUES

TO REFLECT the values of an organization means ensuring that all systems, procedures and programs mirror the values of the organization so there is consistency and congruency throughout.

THE ROLE OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Staff Development Units are not the only players in the issue of corporate culture. Just as Human Resource departments are a supportive function to line positions, so too, in this respect, staff development is a support to the organization, to the line and top managers who have the responsibility for the organization.

Yet, because staff development has a strong mandate to provide education, which is a form of socialization, it has an opportunity to socialize employees to the corporate culture and values of the organization.

CASE EXAMPLE

The Staff Development Division of the Public Service Commission is responsible for providing learning opportunities for some 12,000 public service employees. In a year over 5,000 employees take part in over 50 scheduled seminars covering some 50 topics ranging from planning to communications to leadership to creativity to performance management. The division recognizes that different target groups have different needs and so offers targetted programs for support staff, middle managers, and senior managers.

The division is also responsible for providing consulting services, on team building, organizational design; for developing the skills required for an effective performance management system, for the orientation of new employees and for additional development opportunities such as education leave.

As the first step towards influencing and reflecting the corporate culture of the public service in its programs, the division undertook to identify and to define the corporate values of the organization. Four "ideal" values were found:

- Being committed to excellence in providing quality service to the citizens of Saskatchewan;
- Taking initiative and being innovative to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the public service;
- Working together as a team of employees to build Saskatchewan's future;
- Maintaining professionalism in the performance of duties so that the people of Saskatchewan know they are well served.

Every opportunity to posit and communicate these values was taken:

- By referring to them in seminar introductions;
- By including them in printed materials distributed to seminar participants and to other human resource staff in the government;
- By publishing them in the staff development calendar, and
- By communicating them in a letter and in a session to all of the Staff Development Division's facilitators.

Besides communicating values the Staff Development Division knew that it had to reach its some 50 facilitators who are contracted to deliver staff development seminars. They are responsible for conducting 80 percent of in-house seminars. Since most of them have more contact with public employees than in-house staff, it was important to convey to them the corporate values of the organizations. Even more so, it was important for them to reflect these corporate values in their

work. As a result an orientation session was held and facilitators were asked to describe what they could do to incorporate corporate values in their work. They came up with an impressive list:

- Use case studies which refer to the government context;
- Provide positive samples and scenarios;
- Ensure that handout materials are professional
- Integrate corporate values into the seminar content;
- Provide teamwork experiences;
- Create a learning environment which encourages creativity and innovation, and
- Be a role model.

The seven standards developed by these facilitators became part of the Staff Development Division's hiring criteria for determining whether or not to contract with a given facilitator. Besides having the necessary expertise in a particular subject and the ability to relate that expertise, facilitators would need to have the ability to reflect the corporate values fo the public service in their seminars.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, staff development has an important role to play in the corporate culture of an organization. One of the roles may well be to facilitate the process of developing a set of corporate values which are the essence of a corporate culture. To do this the staff development unit may also want to analyze what the existing corporate culture is.

Another role may be to further define and influence those values by clearly articulating and stating the standards which govern the behavior and action of employees. This may be done through specific seminars such as seminars on customer service if service to people is a corporate value.

And finally, the fourth role, is to reflect the corporate culture in all of its operations including in its communications and in the seminars and workshops offered.

This paper attempted to illustrate how these roles may be carried out by looking at the work of the Staff Development Division of the Saskatchewan Public Service Commission. This case example illustrates the important role staff development unit may play in analyzing, defining, influencing and shaping the corporate culture of an organization.

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